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ABSTRACT

The state of Louisiana has commissioned several pilot projects to design, implement, and evaluate a teacher leader curriculum leading to eligibility for the new teacher leader certificate. The purpose of this paper is to describe one of these pilots, the St. Charles Teacher Leader Institute (TLI), which was implemented as a partnership between the St. Charles Parish public schools, Louisiana, and the University of New Orleans. The first part of the paper describes the TLI's design and implementation structure. The second part summarizes an outside evaluation of the program, and the third identifies some lessons learned in the design and implementation of the pilot project. The TLI included the equivalent of nine credit hours of graduate course work and spanned parts of two academic semesters. It integrated the study of school leadership with an array of field-based problem solving and school improvement activities. The TLI used an electronic, Web-based instructional support system. Each student designed, enacted, and evaluated a project that supported the school's current improvement plan, and they then presented and defended their proposal, budget, and evaluation plan. The external evaluation, which drew on focus groups of participants, interviews with professors, and other sources of data, found that the program increased the pool of potential principals. The evaluation identified some reasons for staying in the program and other reasons for leaving it. In spite of complaints about the amount of time required to complete the assignments and the ambiguity students experienced, they felt successful and were positive about the substance of the program. A primary lesson learned from the program is the importance of partnership. Also identified as important was the outside funding provided by the BellSouth Foundation, which helped attract and retain students. An appendix summarizes topics, activities, and performances. (Contains 18 references.) (SLD)

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Cultivating Teacher Leadership for School Improvement

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Cultivating Teacher Leadership for School Improvement

There is a renewed focus on the role of educational leaders in promoting school improvement (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003), and in particular, the role of school leaders in meeting the needs of "especially challenging schools" (Leithwood & Steinbach, 2003). In part, this is a result of increased pressure placed on schools through high-stakes accountability policies. It is also attributable to the fact that the context for educational leadership has become increasingly complex, and that the role of school principal has changed dramatically. While in the past the principalship was defined mostly in terms of managerial and administrative responsibilities, today there is a much greater emphasis on leadership, facilitation, and the ability to enlist stakeholders in student-centered reform (Fullan, 2001; Hessel & Holloway, 2002; Leithwood & Janzi, 1999; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

As Fullan (2000) suggested, however, the more we understand about school improvement, the more we come to the conclusion that principal leadership is essential but not sufficient unto itself to promote success. Discussions of the connection between leadership and school improvement have increasingly included the notion of distributing leadership among professional educators at the school site (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998). Our understanding of educational change demonstrates that the kind of school improvement needed to realize significant gains in student learning requires the active engagement of all stakeholders; consequently, our image of the type of leadership we need, and from whom, has expanded.

Recent literature stresses that school leadership needs to extend beyond the person of the principal, to all levels of the school and school system. The concept of teacher leadership

in school improvement has thus become a hot topic (see, for example, Lieberman, Saxl & Miles, 2000; Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000; Zepada, Mayers & Benson, 2003). The call for teacher leadership is both an acknowledgement of the need for faculty buy-in to change activity and recognition of the expanded ways teachers regularly become involved in school improvement. Teachers in effective schools are called upon to participate in designing and conducting school improvement projects, serve on school improvement teams, and engage in strategic planning. As Marsh (2000) concluded, successful schools are able to transform instruction not because the principal directs others to change but because a culture of shared leadership has been established in which professional educators work together to achieve a collective focus.

In recognition of the shifting focus toward distributed school leadership, and in response to the growing need to recruit, retain and motivate quality teachers for today's schools, the State of Louisiana recently amended its educational leadership certification structure to include a new category, Teacher Leader. The teacher leader certificate emerged as a part of the state's Blue Ribbon Initiative on Teacher Quality, which includes a commitment to a vision of school leadership preparation that differs dramatically from the system that has been in place for the past few decades. The state also commissioned several pilot projects to design, implement, and evaluate a teacher leader curriculum leading to eligibility for the new teacher leader certificate.

The purpose of this paper is to describe one of these pilots, the St. Charles Teacher Leader Institute (TLI), which was implemented as a partnership between the St. Charles Parish Public Schools and the University of New Orleans. The paper will be presented in three sections: First, we will describe the TLI's design and implementation structure. Second,

the outside evaluation of the TLI will be summarized. Finally, we will close with some lessons learned in the design and implementation of this pilot project.

The St. Charles TLI: Design and Implementation

In anticipation of state's certification changes and to address the district's and state's need for high-quality school leaders, the St. Charles Parish Schools and the University of New Orleans sought funding to design and deliver a curriculum focused on teacher leadership. The purpose of the project was to develop a partnership program between the St. Charles Parish Public Schools, local leaders in business and industry, and the College of Education at the University of New Orleans to develop a graduate program that fosters teacher leadership in school improvement.

Late in the summer of 2002, the BellSouth Foundation awarded the St. Charles Parish Schools $50,000 to conduct this program, which was made available for up to 30 teachers Parish-wide. The St. Charles-UNO TLI included the equivalent of nine (9) credit hours of graduate course work, and spanned parts of two academic semesters. This section of the paper briefly reviews the program designed and completed by students enrolled in the St. Charles-UNO Teacher Leader Institute, including information on selection, program curriculum, and assessment.

Selection Criteria

Recruitment of teacher leaders for inclusion in the St. Charles program included a multi-stage screening process, to ensure both quantity and quality of the applicant pool. Screening was conducted by a program steering committee, which was made up of two UNO faculty, two central office administrators, and two school principals. Screening criteria, as communicated to prospective participants, were as follows:

Teachers who qualify for the program will be expected to make the following commitment:

- ✓ Meet admissions criteria for graduate programs in educational leadership
- ✓ Register for and attend classes and support group meetings
- ✓ Maintain a 3.0 GPA
- ✓ Pay 1/3 of the tuition for coursework and other expenses not covered by the grant
- ✓ Develop and maintain a Professional Portfolio
- ✓ Apply for Teacher Leader certification after completion of the program
- ✓ Continue employment with the district for the foreseeable future

Teachers who are interested in applying for this initiative will participate in a screening process. Candidates will:

- ✓ Attend an orientation session
- ✓ Complete an application for the University of New Orleans
- ✓ Compose a cover letter *describing your involvement in school improvement and professional development in St. Charles Parish and explaining how you envision using a graduate degree in leadership to improve schools and leadership in your practice.*
- ✓ Secure 3 Professional References, including one from your principal and one from a peer in your school
- ✓ Respond to a writing prompt
- ✓ Participate in an interview (at the discretion of the faculty/district)

The writing prompt students completed involved answering the following question: "In what ways should teacher leaders help individual teachers and schools improve teaching and learning?"

The district's personnel department reviewed the applicant pool to ensure that teachers met state requirements for the teacher leader endorsement. The applications of those who met these requirements were scored using a rubric developed by the steering committee. In total, 25 students were offered acceptance into the cohort from a pool of 35 applicants, and ultimately, 21 students enrolled. Of these students, 19 successfully completed the program.

Overview of the Program

The St. Charles-UNO TLI integrated the study of school leadership with an array of field-based problem solving and school improvement activities that helped participants understand leadership and develop the ability to lead efforts to change and improve schools. Consistent with the state framework for pilot programs on teacher leadership, the St. Charles-UNO TLI incorporated the following:

- A combination of face-to-face and field-based professional development activities including a minimum of 135 contact hours (9 graduate credits);
- Support from a steering committee made up of university faculty, district and school administrators;
- Support and involvement of current administrators who served as mentors, facilitators and evaluators of student work.

The primary objective of the program was to prepare students to play significant leadership roles in school improvement. Specific course topics and performances were aligned with the Louisiana Standards for School Principals, which in turn are aligned with the Interstate

School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards. The knowledge and skills emphasized in this entry level instructional and administrative leadership institute were aligned with the Louisiana Standards for School Principals, augmented by important leadership concepts evident in the existing knowledge base on school leadership and the role of school leaders in school improvement. The following resources were used as primary source materials for the TLI:

1. Fullan, M. (2002). Leading in a culture of change.
2. Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). The right to learn: A blueprint for creating schools that work.
3. Bolman, L. & Deal, T. (1997). Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice and leadership, 2nd ed.
4. Senge, P. and others. (2000). Schools that learn: A fifth discipline fieldbook for educators, parents, and everyone who cares about education.
5. Glickman, C. and others. (2001). SuperVision and instructional leadership: A developmental approach, 5th ed.
6. Acheson, K. & Gall, M. (1997). Techniques in the clinical supervision of teachers: Preservice and inservice applications, 4th ed.

Additional resource materials included selected journal and magazine articles; ASCD video materials dealing with instructional supervision and educational reform; electronic materials accessed through the course Blackboard site and the Worldwide Web (such as the ITCOT simulation, referenced above); materials made available through the National Staff Development Council; and guest speakers.

As a part of the BellSouth grant, students received a copy of each of the aforementioned books. During the course of the institute, they completed a variety of assignments demonstrating mastery of the material contained in these volumes. For instance, early in the institute students read and wrote a review of Fullan's *Leading in a Culture of Change*, and later used Fullan's leadership model to analyze and critique a case study of their own leadership. Senge's and Darling-Hammond's books were used in TLI-based faculty study groups, which gave participants first-hand experience in organizing and leading study groups as teacher leaders in their schools. Students also integrated the concepts evident in these materials into their performances and reflections on these performances.

As mentioned, the topics incorporated into the St. Charles-UNO TLI were selected to reflect the Louisiana Standards. The material most closely corresponded to three graduate-level educational administration courses offered under UNO's current certification program:

- EDAD 6800, School Leadership
- EDAD 6850, Supervision of Instruction
- EDAD 6875, School Improvement

Specific content and course performances were designed to reflect the myriad ways teachers might act as leaders in school-wide change activities, in relation to peers as mentors and critical friends, and on district-level task forces. Appendix A includes a summary table that provides a review of the topics covered in the TLI and the performances completed by students during the course of the institute. Performances were coded using a system that indicates the primary standard reflected by the activity.

The TLI employed an electronic, web-based instructional support system using Blackboard and other cutting-edge technologies, such as the school improvement simulation,

In the Center of Things, created by the faculty of Vanderbilt University to help school leaders understand school improvement, planning, and school leadership. Students were expected to develop and present a culminating portfolio that provided evidence of the knowledge, skills and abilities gained in the program, aligned with state and national leadership standards. Since each performance (and their accompanying artifacts) may reflect students' knowledge and abilities on more than one standard, the table presented in Appendix B provides a crosswalk of each performance by the standards.

The centerpiece of the performances was made possible through support provided through the BellSouth grant. Each student designed, enacted and evaluated a project that supported the attainment of an objective in his/her school's current improvement plan. To accomplish this, students worked with their principal and school leadership team to analyze relevant data, design an action plan, identify resources needed, implement and evaluate their project. En route, they presented and defended their proposal, budget and evaluation plan before the TLI steering committee using the district grant format.

As leaders in their schools, students facilitated the implementation of their project, and prepared a summary report of their accomplishments and the impact of their project, which they presented to the TLI steering committee. Their reflections on the project highlighted improvement activities, consequences, impact on school's current and future improvement plans, and leadership skills and abilities developed through participation.

The BellSouth grant allowed us to provide students with a modest budget to support their improvement projects. In total, approximately $12,000 was spread between the various projects. These moneys went directly to improvement activities in St. Charles schools, and provided students with direct experience with various management functions, including

budgeting, purchasing, grant writing, and financial accountability. Carrying out the projects also provided direct experience with planning, facilitative leadership, and in most instances, conducting action research in school settings. A list of student projects and their associated budgets is provided in Appendix C.

To successfully complete the TLI, students were expected to complete a portfolio that featured artifacts reflecting the knowledge, skills and abilities they acquired during the course of the institute. Specifically, students in the St. Charles-UNO TLI were required to develop paper-based learning portfolios, which included artifacts, reflections, and class exercises completed during the course of the institute. Toward the end of the institute, students used their working portfolios to develop an electronic assessment portfolio, which represented the culminating evidence of their accomplishments. Web-based portfolios were to be constructed using the Pass-Port system, an online portfolio system made available by the Louisiana State Department of Education. However, initially the electronic portfolios were developed using generic software (Word, PowerPoint, etc.), because the Pass-Port system was not made available to us until early April. At that time, both faculty and students received basic training in the use of Pass-Port, and students were given the option of converting their electronic portfolios to Pass-Port. A standard template was created to facilitate this, aligned with the Louisiana Standards.

Portfolios were assessed using a point system aligned to the performances listed in Appendix A. Point totals were determined by a consensus of the instructors, with input from members of the district steering committee. In final analysis, a majority of students used Pass-Port to present their electronic portfolios, both to the faculty for assessment and at an Aspiring Leaders Portfolio Showcase Celebration, which was held for members of the school

board, central administration, SDE representatives, members of the business community, and other members of the school community at large.

Support structure

The TLI employed a support structure that included university personnel and school-based administrators. Administrators in each of the students' schools served as mentors and facilitators of student performances during the program. Among their duties included meeting periodically with students to discuss their progress; reviewing student work and ensuring that performances were aligned with the school's improvement plan; providing feedback on student work; and working with students to develop their leadership development plan.

The St. Charles-UNO TLI was supported by a combination of school system and university faculty, augmented by a number of invited speakers. Two full-time faculty members in educational leadership took primary responsibility for designing the curriculum and facilitating the institute. In addition to the cadre of school administrators who acted as mentors during the program, UNO faculty and five central office and school-based administrators from the district served as a steering committee for the TLI. The steering committee participated in all phases of the institute, including recruitment and selection of students; curriculum design; selection of primary source materials; review of student work; and trouble-shooting during the course of the program. Thanks again to the support provided by BellSouth, members of the steering committee and school administrators who served as mentors were provided with a modest stipend to recognize their efforts and support their work.

The TLI faculty also had an opportunity during the course of the institute to work with Dr. Helen Barrett, a nationally recognized expert on electronic portfolios and the use of portfolios in teacher education and educational leadership programs. Dr. Barrett was brought in by the College of Education and Human Development to assist faculty in designing pre-service teacher and educational leadership portfolios.

Program Outcomes: The External Evaluation

Consistent with both the state pilot program protocol and the BellSouth grant, the St. Charles-UNO TLI was evaluated by an external, independent evaluator, Dr. Caroline Cody of Cody Associates. Dr. Cody's evaluation was designed to be both formative and summative, and includes a review of the program curriculum, student performances, outcomes associated with leadership development and the impact of leadership on school improvement, and program structure. The material that follows is excerpted from the evaluation report.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation design was based on the project proposal and an interview with the project director. Data from students were collected using first, an anonymous questionnaire, which was followed by focus group interviews. Questionnaires were mailed to students not present. Phone calls and email also were used to contact those who did not respond to the mailed questionnaire, and attempts were made to contact by phone students who had been admitted but had not enrolled and/or completed the program. Email and phone calls were used to collect data from principals and members of the advisory committee. Personal interviews were conducted with the UNO professors. Data also were collected through conversations with students, their principals, and members of the steering committee at the

culminating event of the program, a demonstration/reception that provided an opportunity for students to share their portfolios with colleagues in the school district and with outside guests.

Evaluation results are organized according to the two main purposes of the St. Charles TLI: to increase the pool of potential educational leaders in the parish, and to assess the effectiveness of the program in terms of student learning.

Question 1: Did the project increase the pool of potential principals in St. Charles Parish?

Initially, 25 students were offered admission to the program. Of those, 21 enrolled and completed the first semester of coursework. Nineteen returned for the second semester, and 19 of those students have completed the program. Demographic data show that the majority of students (71%) are under 40 years of age, and the same percentage have between 5 and 10 years of teaching. All but one student indicated that they would seek the Teacher Leader certificate, and 76% indicated that they intend to continue graduate study toward certification for the Principalship (77% of those at UNO).

Factors That Affected Retention and Satisfaction

There was a great deal of consensus on almost all topics among the participants in the focus groups concerning those factors that affected retention and satisfaction. These themes contribute to an understanding of retention and attrition among those who were originally selected for the project and of the satisfaction of those who completed the project. Data from the anonymous questionnaire provide information about the themes evident in the focus groups as well as other information about students' responses to the program. Where data

from the questionnaire are used, numbers in parenthesis represent the item mean scores for the group on a five-point scale, 5 being the most positive.

Three factors were consistently cited by students as reasons for staying in the program: incentives, principal support, and peer support. Two themes emerged as potential reasons for leaving the program and/or as sources of dissatisfaction: the demanding nature of the performance-based program, and the concurrent ambiguity associated with a pilot project.

Project Design Incentives: In the focus group discussions, the consensus seemed to be that the offer of tuition assistance, the convenience of having the classes presented in the Parish, and the comfort of attending class with St. Charles colleagues had resulted in students' participation in the project and work toward the principalship. In addition, in some cases, the fact that principals had sought them out to encourage their participation was important to their interest and their completion of the program. Without those incentives, most said they would not have begun their graduate work at this time.

These incentives were not powerful enough to keep students in the program if they were not interested in becoming principals. One drop-out explained that when she "...sat down at the computer and didn't know how to begin the first assignment, I just didn't need the frustration. I didn't want to be a principal anyway."

Principal Support: Not only did principals in most cases seek out potential leaders to invite them to participate, in most cases, principals provided support for students throughout the project. Although a few students indicated that their principals had not provided support, most students responded on the questionnaire that their principal had provided support (3.9). Principals indicated that they were aware that program participants were under a great deal of pressure and as a result, they provided support in addition to voiced understanding and

encouragement. One principal worked with a participant after school; another provided school time for teachers to work together on their tasks. No doubt, principals' awareness of teachers' distress and support for them were powerful motivators for students to complete the program.

Colleagues in the Cohort: In addition, over and over, members of the groups explained how important their colleagues had been in getting through the assigned tasks. It was clear that teachers who had participating colleagues in their schools had worked together and supported each other. On the questionnaire, participants indicated positive feelings about their colleagues' collegiality (4.4), collaboration (4.4), and quality of thought (4.5). On all three related items, scores were among the highest on the questionnaire.

The demanding nature of a performance-based program: The most prevalent theme associated with student dissatisfaction centered on the amount of time the assignments required. There was a sense among the group that the work far exceeded their expectations when they decided to participate. One participant said he had seen what students attending other universities had had to do for their credits, and "it didn't touch what we had to do." Student after student wanted to explain how the amount of work had taken time away from their teaching and their families. Students expressed their concerns with a great deal of emotion as they talked of new babies and of missing children's Saturday morning games.

Concerns about meeting their own standards for teaching were also expressed, sometimes with a degree of anger. "I just didn't teach as well as I usually do this whole year," one said. Principals commented that they saw the effects of these pressures. In explaining the stress that students felt, one member of the advisory committee commented, "These people are perfectionists. They'll always do above and beyond what is expected."

The participants were quick to say that the professors had "...said they would be flexible, but it was mostly on when things were due, not the number of things." Another student added, "Did we have to do all the standards?" Still another said, " I felt like we did the reading and writing like a traditional course and the performance tasks too." One student volunteered, "One night I didn't come to class; I just couldn't stand to hear about another assignment." However, often in the same sentence, students would say "but I learned a lot." The groups agreed that the fact that it was a pilot explained a lot of their problems. One student said, "I know they wouldn't do the courses the same way again." The group nodded in agreement.

The faculty said that students were hesitant to negotiate when given the opportunity at the beginning of the program and given to dramatic exaggeration when given the chance to complain later in the program. For instance, students were not required to address all standards -- only to have a tab in their portfolio for them all, and they could have used activities already done to satisfy portfolio requirements. A comparison with traditional course requirements was not possible for many of these students who were in their first graduate course. One student who had attended UNO to take curriculum courses shared privately that these students had never been asked to work very hard, "like we do at UNO."

Several respondents mentioned that one of the requirements set out at the beginning of the course was that students "conduct a total of four classroom observations (at least two in a school other than your own)." In designing the requirement, the Steering Committee voiced the thought that it would be good for students to get into other schools, but this assignment caused such consternation among students that the committee recommended that the requirement be dropped. One administrator admitted that going to another school would

have been a good experience for students, but it became "just too difficult." This member of the administration felt that they had needed more time to plan before the course began, "Perhaps we should have looked at the assignments more closely," the administrator said.

Ambiguity: Students said they didn't know what to expect. One student commented that assignments, meeting dates, "...everything kept changing." "I didn't know when to say 'this is ok'," one student said. "I know it shouldn't have been this hard," one explained. A probe revealed that the group felt that the substance of the assignments was not very difficult, but the challenge lay in the amount of work and the lack of clarity about what had to be done.

These are professionals who know their business, and they analyzed their student experience from the teaching perspective. One commented using a Madeline Hunter term that, "The class needed to have done some guided practice in class to be sure that everyone was off to a good start and understood what they needed to do." The participants reminded each other than they had been warned about living with ambiguity, but that didn't seem to reduce the strong feelings they had about what they considered communication glitches and unnecessary changes. They were quick to volunteer, however, that the faculty had been available to help.

The instructors knew that ambiguity was a problem for the students and were not surprised since insecurity is a problem for most beginning graduate students, and further, they explained, the culture of the district is characterized by a sense that "Things are done right in St. Charles" and a strong sense of compliance with what is expected. Given the culture and the students' concern that they rise to their own standards, it was not surprising to them that students wanted to know exactly what to do and felt at risk when they were not sure or when the faculty was not as specific as students felt they should be on how to

proceed. Absenteeism was a problem, the faculty volunteered, particularly on Saturday mornings, and students who were absent missed out on important communication. The faculty had hoped that electronic messages that were available would keep students up to date on events and plans.

Evaluator's comments regarding question 1: Did the project result in an increased principalship pool in St. Charles Parish? Yes, at least 13 professionals, most of them between the ages of thirty and forty and most fairly early in their teaching careers, are preparing to be principals earlier than they would have if the project had not happened.

Perhaps more students would have been retained in the program had they had a better understanding of the demands of UNO graduate study and if people in the district had not been aware of less challenging programs. In that case, however, more students may have decided not to participate. When asked in the focus groups if they would do it again, many students were hesitant. However, the focus groups were conducted at a time when students were under the most pressure to get their portfolios completed and to comply with the state's requirement for an electronic portfolio. At the culminating activity, students were much more relaxed and very proud of themselves as they explained their portfolios to colleagues and guests. Many did not hesitate to say that if they had to decide again, they would participate.

In summary, the evaluation data indicate that yes, the project resulted in at least 13 potential additions to the principalship pool in St. Charles Parish. These candidates might not have ever initiated study without the program, certainly not at this time.

Question 2: Was the design for learning effective?

Ideally, to determine the strengths of a program one would need evidence that people completing it can be successful in the job for which they are preparing. The school system

reports that they took into special consideration students who had completed the program when making new assignments for next year; five teachers who participated have been given new opportunities that the system believes will groom them for future promotion into administrative positions. One was given a position of leadership by the state department of education. The state believes that by requiring a performance-based program, candidates will provide evidence of the next best kind of evaluation. This being the case, the quality of the portfolios would be the best measure of success. That judgment is beyond the purview of this evaluation.

The data presented here uses the judgments of the people involved in the program, most particularly the students themselves to evaluate the program design. For instance, when students were asked if the portfolios represented all that they had learned, all those in the informal group at the culminating activity responded negatively. One said, "We learned a lot more than those particular things." Principals were asked if they had noticed any signs of growth in leadership in the students they had nominated for the program. Of those that responded, all said that, "Yes," they had observed growth. One commented that the students had come "closer to understanding the big picture of administration." Another said the student was "more understanding" of the job she does.

Evidence of an Effective Design

Student judgments of satisfaction were evident in the questionnaire and were supported and, in some cases, explained what had been said in the groups about the following facets of the courses:

Convenience: Convenience is an important factor for people with complicated lives. Students in the program consistently rated the location as convenient (4.5) but the schedule

less so (3.1). These data support concerns expressed in the focus groups about the Saturday classes. These concerns were not unanimous, however.

The Quality of Discussions: Items addressed the level of thinking involved in class discussions (4.2) and the degree to which students were stimulated (3.9). These items received moderately high scores, but scores for the use of class time (3.1) indicate that these teachers under the pressure to get everything done think that class time could have been better spent.

The Readings: Textbooks were scored as to their value to the students. Five of the six books received high ratings with more than half the students choosing the highest rating for all five (4.4; 4.1; 4.4; 4.4; 4.7), *Schools That Learn* received the highest scores. Students' scores for the Bolman and Deal book, *Reframing Organizations*, indicate that they found it much less valuable (2.8).

The Instructors: The UNO faculty consistently received high scores in the areas of knowledge (4.8), teaching skill (4.4), and helpfulness (4.2). Group comments while high in emotional content, were not personal. While students were critical of the amount of work and the ambiguity associated with the pilot, they also recognized that faculty acknowledged these things consistently and made efforts to deal with them.

The Assignments: The assignments got very mixed responses from students. When time for assignments was the judgment to be made, the majority of students' scores were in the negative range (2.2), indicating that they felt that excessive time was required, and they had experienced frustration with the assignments (3.9). In the focus groups, this was a dominant theme. On the questionnaire, it was clear, however, that in spite of the complaints, participants felt positive about the use of the portfolio to demonstrate learning (4.0). The

feedback that students were provided received mixed responses, but most scores were in the positive range (3.9).

Since the faculty had returned all papers promptly with many comments, the faculty credited student concerns about feedback to their general sense of insecurity and grade consciousness. The faculty found it discouraging that the students had not used the feedback provided to improve the quality of their work before including it in the portfolio.

Students were not highly critical in their evaluation of the design of the performance tasks (3.8), but group discussions of performance assessments revealed the expertise of the participants. A student explained, "When we do performance assessment with our kids, we try to individualize the performance to what the kid needs to learn. Here we all had the same assignment." They did not acknowledge that the faculty had throughout the program given them latitude to vary, negotiate, alter, or adjust assignments. Instead they tended to default to "what do you (the faculty) want?"

Teacher Leadership: One question about the content of the courses arose in the focus groups. One student said, "I just don't understand this teacher leadership idea." The program had been sold to teachers in the parish as being appropriate for teachers interested in leadership within the teacher ranks, and all but one completer indicated that they will seek the new state endorsement. However, one theme evident in the group discussions was the students' lack of understanding of the teacher leader concept and the significance of the concept for traditional administration. When asked how they as principals would provide leadership opportunities for teachers, hey described the opportunities that exist in their schools presently—with some cynicism about "doing the principal's job." When asked how active teacher leaders might change the principalship, there were few responses.

Evaluator's comments regarding question 2: At the project culminating activity, there was no doubt that everyone thought the project had been a great success. Students showed their portfolios with great pride and competence. Their principals beamed on the sidelines. Outside guests were impressed with what the program had accomplished. One had to believe that the process of being selected by the school district and supported by their principals in completing a set of leadership tasks under difficult pressures had been effective in preparing them for leadership.

These data reveal the advantages and disadvantages of the cohort approach to graduate study in leadership. The social power implicit in cohorts to assist each other and encourage retention is strong, but that power also can have the effect of coalescing thought and preventing divergent thought. These beginning graduate students believed that they had to spend too much time on the assignments in this program and, as mostly young people and excellent teachers, they were not happy that as a result, they had had to spend less time with their families and in preparation for their teaching. They reinforced each other over and over and it was difficult for them to get past that issue.

As teachers chosen for their excellence in teaching, they applied their knowledge of teaching to their analysis of how they had been taught. Like most teachers, they used a deficit model of teaching evaluation and concentrated on what could have been done better. And like most evaluators, they avoided evaluating the substance of the coursework. When asked directly, they reported that they found the books valuable, the professors knowledgeable, the portfolio a good way to demonstrate learning, and they acknowledged they "had learned a lot."

In summary, in spite of their complaints about the amount of time required to complete the assignments and the painful ambiguity they experienced, students felt successful and were positive about the substance of the program.

Evaluators recommendations

For UNO: To increase student retention and satisfaction, the data would seem to support the following recommendations:

1. Consider a different course schedule. Three credits per semester rather than six would be more appropriate for hard-working young teachers. An additional course could be offered in a mini-summer session. A weekly schedule involving five hours (4-9 pm) but only one night per week would also be indicated.
2. Provide opportunities in class for students to begin assignments to give faculty a chance to be sure that students have a good start on what they will have to do. This should give students more confidence and shorten the time required to complete assignments.
3. Provide rubrics and models to help students understand what is being required and what is optional. For instance, rules about decorations and plastic covers, limitations on the number of pages, etc. could help students control their investment in each assignment.
4. Prevent deadline creep by holding to some deadlines early in the program thereby preventing students from getting behind, stewing unnecessarily about uncompleted assignments, and missing the opportunity for feedback.

5. Build in some requirements that students choose readings or assignments to acknowledge different skills and interests among students and to increase students' feelings of empowerment and personal mastery.
6. Address ambiguity even more directly. Consider using the Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale to help students understand their feelings and the ways their insecurities might affect their leadership.
7. Increase the attention given to teacher leadership from the perspectives of both the teacher and the principal. Discuss why the state would provide an endorsement for teacher leaders and what teacher leaders need to know. St. Charles would be a very good place to get teachers and administrators to confront the issues associated with leadership in the teaching force.

For St. Charles Parish Schools: To develop a pool of strong potential principals, the data supports the following recommendations:

1. Continue to provide experiences that will prepare these students for principalship. Perhaps provide them with opportunities to meet to discuss their future coursework. Provide seminars that prepare them specifically for work in the district, supplementing university coursework in areas such as budget, facilities, etc.
2. Use your influence to ensure that all coursework provided in the parish is current, well designed, and challenging.
3. Consider the possibility that professionals may be so concerned about compliance that they hesitate to use their best professional judgment when doing so is clearly appropriate or required.

Lessons Learned

The first lesson worth remembering from this pilot project concerns partnership. Partnerships such as this one should be more common. The interests of school districts and university training programs often coincide, but seldom does a mutually respectful partnership result. The Parish administration took occasion to say that the partnership has been "a good one," acknowledging that some times such partnerships are not. Often universities approach work with school districts with a sense of *noblesse oblige*, and school districts enter partnerships with cynicism about the "ivory tower" approach to leadership. What happened here that made the partnership work was that both parties were clear about their own goals as well as about the goals of the other partner, and both partners recognized that their goals could be met through collaboration. Within this framework of self-interest and respect, when issues arose, the parties were able to work together to find the best outcome.

From the beginning, students understood the character of the partnership and that the Parish had an interest in them and in their completion of the program. This gave the program standing among students that for most withstood their frustrations and resulted in learning that exceeds what we have been able to document and what students understand. Clear signals were sent to building-level administrators about the districts' investment in the program, both through direct communications from the superintendent's office and through the establishment of a shared decision-making structure to govern the project.

Outside funding provided by the BellSouth Foundation was very important to the success of this partnership, as well. Both universities and school districts in Louisiana suffer from a lack of resources to invest in activities wherein the fiscal outcome is not overriding.

In this project, at no time did competition over resources become an issue, and data indicate that the fact that this partnership had outside resources to attract students to the program was very important to its success.

The second lesson has to do with understanding a resource of a different kind: the students' time, energy and ability to cope with the demands of a performance-based program. To say that making the shift from a traditional to a performance-based program was a major undertaking is a gross understatement. For faculty involved in this program, this was a first effort at designing and implementing a true performance-based curriculum, and in itself this introduced a significant degree of ambiguity into the venture. By all accounts, this was well understood from the outset. What was not anticipated, though, was the degree of apprehension and confusion students experienced as a result of the shift to a performance-based format. Although faculty persistently reminded students of the "different nature" of the course design and assessment requirements, the student's lack of reference for comparison made it unreasonable to expect that these warnings would result in a useful response. Students reflected on the undue amount of work they had to complete as compared with colleagues enrolled at neighboring universities or in their undergraduate programs. They reflected on their past experiences in university settings, and their demonstrated abilities in the past to catch up whenever they let their course work slide a bit. They also reflected on the fact that in the past, the syllabus was anything but a negotiated document, and thus sought answers to questions like "what do the faculty want" rather than "how can I demonstrate mastery of this standard." With few exceptions, students segmented out-of-class experiences from in-class requirements, thus failing to take advantage of the fact that many of their job experiences could demonstrate that they know and are able to do a course-required

performance. In effect, students perpetuated a parallel structure between their work worlds and their college classes, rather than seeking to integrate them and take advantage of the overlaps between their leadership roles in their schools and a performance-based program in educational leadership.

This is an extremely important lesson for university faculty in educational leadership at a time when programs across the country are trying to make the shift from a traditional course-based, seat-time format to one that is more authentic, embedded, and performance-based. In a sense, it is reminiscent of most experience with educational change: Faculty saw the major changes to be implemented as structural in nature, and down-played the realities of organizational culture and students' frame of reference. In this pilot program, little attention was paid to transition, helping students understand the bigger pictures associated with the new program, and helping everyone involved get up to speed with both the power and the potential of a performance-based format. The reactions of students in this pilot – their sense of overload, intolerance for ambiguity, and segmentation of their work world from their university experience – suggests that faculty need to spend considerable time considering reculturing as well as restructuring their graduate programs.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Summary of topics, activities and performances

LA Standards for School Principals	Topics	Activities, performances
Vision	Developing and Communicating Vision Role of vision in organizational culture and change (FISH! Video)	V1: Develop personal vision of own role as an educational leader; share with colleagues, receive feedback and critique. Paper: case study of your personal best leadership experience. Analyze case using Fullan's components of effective leadership (Leading in a Culture of Change).
		V2: Using Darling-Hammond's model (The Right to Learn), develop vision of effective/learner and learning centered school; receive feedback and critique.
		V3: Facilitate the development of a vision statement that articulates beliefs about teaching and learning, teachers, adult learning, and supervision with grade level or departmental colleagues.
Teaching and Learning	Components of Effective Teaching; Using Instructional Technology Effectively; Learning Styles and Learning Differences;	Attend district-sponsored workshop on differentiated curriculum. TL1: Create walk-through checklist of effective student learning experiences as they can be observed in a classroom reflecting (corresponding to your vision of quality teaching). Develop initial checklist individually, refine in study groups. Use check sheet in observations; develop data reporting mechanism, summarize and share data.
		TL2: Analyze a videotaped lesson using the LCET observation form; summarize and analyze data.

LA Standards for School Principals	Topics	Activities, performances
	Using Technology in Instructional Supervision; Supervision and Coaching	TL3: Conduct a total of four classroom observations (at least two in a school other than your own). One observation must use the selective verbatim technique, and other observations must use different recording techniques in actual classrooms. Collect and analyze data; share data; reflect on process in class in dyads. Present observation feedback reports.
		TL4: Video-tape one class that you teach. Review tape, write reflective paper on lesson, your strengths and area(s) for improvement. Select and defend your selection of an observation technique you might ask a peer to use to help you improve your instruction.
		TL5: Conduct a full clinical supervision field experience with a teacher. Include audiotape of pre- and post-observation conferences, original field notes, analysis of data, and reflection on the process.
School Management	Governance, Power, and Politics; Concepts of organization and school management functions; Interpersonal Leadership Skills and Group Processes	SM1 (and E1): Overview of management activities embedded in school administration roles, including sessions on the legal context of school leadership; the policy context of school leadership, and the management context of school leadership. Design shadowing activity with your principal, and prepare artifact(s) reflecting participation in one or more management activities.
		SM2: Introduction to concepts of organization analysis, design and development (Bolman & Deal, Reframing Organizations). Complete in-class exercises on four frames of school organization and leadership. Paper: Reframing. Using Bolman & Deal as a conceptual framework, analyze a case study of a school improvement at your school (or your school improvement project; see below) using at least two of the four frames.

LA Standards for School Principals	Topics	Activities, performances
		SM 3: Engage in class and school-based activities reflecting development of group facilitation skills, meeting management skills, and mastery of problem-solving and/or group process tools using facilitative leadership and district-sponsored compression planning framework.
School Improvement	Accountability; Collecting and Analyzing Data; Using Data to Drive School Reform	Attend in-class workshop on data triangulation (based on regional service center framework and case materials). AD1: Review and critique your school's data profile; suggest amendments to format and/or additional data needed
		AD2: Prepare executive summary of accountability data for SIP team; develop summary of implications for existing SIP action plans
		AD3: Review and critique SIP plans for schools in feeder pattern
	Change Processes	CP1: Review various theories on school change, including change models and research on implementation of selected reform plans
		CP2: Analyze case of Jerry Costanza, new principal of Aver High School. Using Blackboard, participate in web-based dialogue on case. Summarize lessons learned in reflection.
		CP3: Research CSRD models (internet research project); create web resource summarizing and comparing at least 3 models

LA Standards for School Principals	Topics	Activities, performances
	Planning and Implementation	PI1: Use PC-based school improvement simulation, In the Center of Things, to design and implement a school improvement program in either Centre City Elementary or High School. Present strategy worksheet, score, and reflection in portfolio.
		PI2: Analyze case of Gillian Broner, principal of Sunset Elementary School. Using Blackboard, participate in web-based dialogue on case. Summarize lessons learned in reflection.
		PI3: Participation in school improvement project. ❑ Develop proposal for initiating or participating in a school improvement project that supports your school's SIP. Work with principal and school leadership team to analyze relevant data, objectives, and action plans including resources needed, implementation and evaluation. ❑ Present and defend proposal to TLI steering committee using district grant format. Include action plan, budget, and evaluation plan. ❑ Implement and evaluate project. ❑ Prepare summary report and present to TLI steering committee. Highlight activities, consequences, impact on school's current and future improvement plans, and leadership skills and abilities developed through participation.
Professional Development	Interpersonal Leadership Skills; Group Process Skills;	PD1: Review and critique NSDC standards and new state criteria for assessing professional development, including variety of professional development formats (e.g., study groups, etc.).
		PD2: Assess school's annual professional development plan

LA Standards for School Principals	Topics	Activities, performances
	Provide opportunities for professional growth; Assess impact of PD activities	PD3: Develop a two-hour faculty in-service using the National Standards for Professional Development. Topic: An innovative teaching technique or other aspect that supports your school improvement plan. Portfolio artifact must include outline of activity; reflection on rationale for selection of in-service topic and format; plan for evaluation of impact on instruction; and reflection on how the in-service activity could be improved.
		PD5: Assess your leadership skills and abilities. Develop your own leadership development plan; post and share.
		PD6: Participate in in-class study groups using Schools that Learn and The Right to Learn as study material.
School-Community Relations	Parents and Community; Interpersonal Leadership Skills and Group Processes	SC1: Participate in brief preview of school-community activities embedded in school administration roles.
Professional Ethics	Ethics in leadership; Ethical decision-making	E1: Brief intro to selected topics related to legal context (ethics, fairness, due process) and policy context (federal, state and local) of school leadership
		E2: Establish code of ethics for teacher leaders (class project); communicate same to grade-level or department peers and revise

Appendix B: Cross-walk of activities and performances by the Louisiana Standards for School Principals

Activities, performances	Vision	Teaching & Learning	School Management	School Improvement	Prof. Development	School-Community Relations	Ethics
V1: personal vision of own leadership; leadership best case.	■		■		■		
V2: vision of effective/learner and learning centered school.	■	■		■	■		■
V3: Facilitate the development of a vision of effective teaching and learning.	■	■		■	■	■	
TL1: Create walk-through checklist of effective student learning experiences; Conduct observations; summarize & share.	■	■	■	■	■		
TL2: Analyze a videotaped lesson using the LCET observation form.		■	■				
TL3: Conduct four observations (at various levels).		■	■	■	■		
TL4: Video-tape and analyze one class that you teach.		■			■		
TL5: Conduct a full clinical supervision field experience with a teacher.		■	■	■	■		
SM1 (and E1): shadowing activity.			■				■
SM2: organization analysis, reframing.			■	■		■	

Activities, performances	Vision	Teaching & Learning	School Management	School Improvement	Prof. Development	School-Community Relations	Ethics
SM 3: group facilitation, meeting mgt, & problem-solving; facilitative leadership.		■	■	■	■	■	
Data triangulation; AD1: Review of school data profile.	■			■		■	
AD2: Summary of accountability data for SIP team.	■		■	■			
AD3: Review, critique SIP plans for schools in feeder pattern.	■			■	■		
CP1: concepts of school change & reform.	■		■	■			
CP2: Analyze change case - Jerry Costanza.			■	■			
CP3: Internet research of CSRD models.		■		■			
PI1: *In the Center of Things*.		■		■	■		
PI2: Analyze case of Gillian Broner.			■	■			
PI3: SIP project - Develop and defend grant proposal and budget; implement and evaluate project; prepare & present summary report.		■	■	■			
PD1: Review and critique NSDC standards.		■			■		

Activities, performances	Vision	Teaching & Learning	School Management	School Improvement	Prof. Development	School-Community Relations	Ethics
PD2: Assess school's annual professional development plan.		■		■	■		
PD3: Develop a two-hour faculty in-service using the NSDC.		■		■	■		
PD5: Develop your own leadership development plan.	■		■		■		
PD6: Participate in in-class study groups.		■		■	■	■	
SC1: review of school-community activities embedded in school administration.			■			■	■
E1: Intro to legal context (ethics, fairness, due process) and policy context (federal, state and local) of school leadership.			■			■	■
E2: Establish code of ethics for teacher leaders.		■	■				■

Appendix C: Student improvement projects

Student(s) and school(s)	Improvement topic	Contribution through BellSouth grant
S1, district-wide	3rd grade writing – assist teachers in developing instructional strategies to improve writing using the framework established in the National Writing Projects	$800
S2,3,4 – J. B. Martin Middle School	Cougar Accelerated Program – incentive program to motivate higher achieving students to perform	$1163
S5, Eual J. Landry Middle School		$1240
S6, Harry M. Hurst Middle School	Landry Achievement Program (LAP)	$1125
	Hurst Incentive Program (HIP)	
S7, Destrehan High School	GEE21 / ITED preparation in mathematics	$600
S8, Lakewood Elementary School	Differentiated instruction	$800
S9, Ethel Schoeffner Elementary School		
S10, Hahnville High School **S11, Destrehan High School**	ACT Preparation using computer-assisted instruction	$2200
S12, Mimosa Park Elementary School	Each one reach one – parent involvement in mentoring program	$850
S13, Albert Cammon Middle School	Pirate's Reading Coves – grades 5-8 core classroom reading achievement program	

Student(s) and school(s)	Improvement topic	Contribution through BellSouth grant
S14, 15 -- Norco Elementary 4-6 School	Geography boards – geography knowledge and skills improvement	$525
S16, Hahnville High School	Facilitate implementation of Smaller Learning Communities CRS project	
S17, R. J. Vial Elementary School	Establish a parenting center	$800
S18, Harry M. Hurst Middle School **S19, Ethel Schoeffner Elementary School**	Working on the Work – comprehensive school reform project	$1440

41

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